

Joliet Now Center of Ordnance Program

Gen. Butler OAC Commander, Tells Growth of Operations

With more than 1,200 workers and a present payroll of nearly \$6 million a year, the Ordnance Ammunition Command is now in effect the nation's ammunition headquarters and has prospects of an even greater future in Joliet, Brig. Gen. Robert G. Butler told Kiwanians Monday at their luncheon meeting in the Hotel Louis Joliet. Gen. Butler has commanded OAC since last June.

In his talk, titled "OAC—Past, Present and Future," Gen. Butler pointed out that since 1942, OAC has been the administrative headquarters or nerve center for most of the nation's ammunition production program. He also said that OAC's authority and operations are still increasing, to include nearly all aspects of ammunition manufacture.

HE RECOUNTED how in 1942 the Army Ordnance corps set up in St. Louis the Office of the Field Director of Ammunition Plants (OFDAP) to direct the 61 new Army ammunition plants then being built; how OFDAP operated during World War II and was almost disbanded after V-J day and how the agency was finally moved to Joliet in 1946 with only 50 key employees left.

He also told how OFDAP kept the 23 remaining ammunition plants in standby for the next four years, and laid plans for future emergencies; how OFDAP became the Ordnance Ammunition Center in 1950 and acquired additional tasks; how OAC "cranked up" the nation's ammunition machine in 1951-52 and turned out a flood of ammunition for U. N. forces in Korea; and how OAC last spring was assigned important functions and three more operating plants, and became the Ordnance Ammunition Command.

GEN. BUTLER then described the present organization and operation of OAC, and related how the agency translates ammunition orders received from Washington into finished ammunition, and then controls its storage all over the country until it is needed. His principal job, he said, involves purchasing the metal parts from private manufacturers all over the country, making the propellant and explosive powders, loading and assembling the finished ammunition, directing its shipment to storage depots, and doing most of the engineering work involved in developing new items and improving present items. He mentioned that for the past four years, the OAC program has averaged about \$1.3 billion a year.

In speaking of OAC's future, Gen. Butler said that it will probably be next spring or summer before all of the recently-assigned

functions are completely integrated into the OAC operation, and by that time, probably 1,400 employees will be working at OAC.

ALSO, HE STATED, it is possible that some of the Army's ammunition work still being done elsewhere may be transferred to OAC in the future, and this would require still more workers at the local headquarters.

In discussing the actual production of ammunition in the 26 Army plants directed by OAC (of which Joliet Arsenal is one), Gen. Butler told the Kiwanians that the high point of production was reached in July, 1953, just before the Korean truce was signed. Since then, he said, the entire program has been slowed down, on an orderly, economical basis.

However, he said that OAC has managed so far to avoid closing down completely any of the plants which were reactivated during the Korean conflict, but is keeping most of them turning over as slowly as possible so as to be ready for any further emergencies. He mentioned that in this slowdown process, Joliet Arsenal has been affected less than most of the other plants, with its force being reduced from 9,000 workers last year to about 4,500 at present. This 50 per cent decrease, Butler said, compares with 60 to 75 per cent at most other plants.

Present with Gen. Butler at the meeting were four of his principal assistants: Col. Ward C. Howard, OAC executive officer; Col. William V. Harber, chief of the field service division; E. A. Frosch, special assistant; and Gordon W. Hirtle, public information officer.



OAC COMMANDER SPEAKS—Brig. Gen. Robert G. Butler, commander of the Ordnance Ammunition Command with headquarters in Joliet, spoke Monday at the weekly luncheon meeting of the Joliet Kiwanis club. It was Gen. Butler's first public appearance in Joliet since being appointed to the OAC post. Pictured, left to right, are A. E. Frosch, special assistant to Gen. Butler; Aldo Malelli, president of Kiwanis; Gen. Butler; Col. Ward C. Howard, OAC executive officer; and Col. William V. Harber, chief of the field service division. (Herald-News photo)